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Generation of Syphilis and Gonorrhœa.

BY JOHN HORNBY, M. D.



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ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS, SYPHILIS AND GONORRHOEA.

There is one fact, connected with syphilis and gonorrhœa, which has escaped the observation of all previous investigators of these diseases, namely, the influence of alcoholic liquors, as drunk by the people of various nations in different beverages, being their predisposing cause.

This fact, which has long occupied my attention, and has been verified by time, I propose to elucidate as briefly as possible.

In tracing the history of our race from Adam to Noah, there is no evidence to be found of syphilis and gonorrhœa having existed among them, educible by definite description, or figurative allusion. Nor do we find any traces of them from the regeneration of our species after the deluge, till the period when the Israelites had established themselves as a nation. There is no evidence of these diseases existing among the Jews during their sojourn in Egypt, from the time of Abraham the founder of their race, to their exodus under Moses; or during their wanderings in the wilderness. And it was not until they had adopted the habitual use of wine as a beverage, which they did, only, after their possession and long continued occupation of their promised land, where the grape abounded, that we find proofs of their contamination. From which time, as the number of victims multiplied, these became the objects of hierarchal denunciation and civil proscription. They were expelled from cities and habitations, and compelled to exist separately. The special appellations of "leper," and "unclean" which were applied to them, indicates the forms in which these diseases existed among them, and correspond to our present knowledge of them, viz., psoriasis, lepra, and tubercle, which modern experience teaches us, are the so-called, secondary forms of syphilis.

As we pass from the Jews to the Greeks, we find similar facts, for syphilis and gonorrhœa were known among them subsequently to the introduction of the orgies of Bacchus, their deity of drunkenness and debauchery.

From the Greeks we turn to the Romans, and among them we find the same fact, namely, syphilis and gonorrhœa following the habitual use of alcoholic liquors, and also the collateral fact, of all those nations subjugated by the Romans, becoming infected with these diseases, who, in imitation of their conquerors, had adopted the use of alcoholic beverages. And from those periods to the present we meet these diseases, and their predisposing causes, progressing side by side, among the populations of Europe, and their American descendants.

Among those nations who do not use alcoholic liquors, and by some of whom they are religiously prohibited, we find no traces of the existence of the objects of our search; they show no signs of ever having been contaminated by them. Among the Mahommedan and Pagan races, from the Arctic to the equator, we miss their presence. And we find the same evidence as we travel over the islands of the Pacific ocean, including the continent of Australia, excepting only, the inhabitants of those portions of their territories that have been visited by Europeans as traders, and by whom they have been initiated into the use of alcoholic liquors, followed by their inevitable consequences, syphilis and gonorrhœa, and their sequels.

Inquiring into the *modus operandi* of alcoholic liquors in producing syphilis and gonorrhœa, we find data, plentiful and well authenticated, of their physiological action on the assimilative and reproductive functions of man. They cause hyperæmia by their moderate use, superinducing excessive assimilation of nutriment, and consequent excited activity of the sexual functions of both sexes, followed by debility of their nervous and vascular systems; causing congestions in them of blood, altered from its healthy standard, and resulting in vitiated secretions which terminate in syphilis or gonorrhœa in, proportion to the malignity or mildness of their qualities, at the time of their absorption, and modified in their degrees of development, by the controlling influences of climate, diet and hygiene. And we find evidences, also, of the pathological conditions they produce in the brain, digestive organs, liver and kidneys, by their long continued use in moderate quantities, or immoderate use in large ones, inducing exhaustion of their previously over taxed functions, and ending in organic diseases of their viscera, which, with the superaddition of syphilis in individuals, terminate in their offspring in scrofula, tuberculosis, and cancer.

And, finally, each year's experience proves that these diseases are

increasing, in alarming proportions, among those populations with whom they have become located ; and that they are perpetuated by their predisposing cause, the habitual use of alcoholic liquors, threatening, as they multiply, to become ultimately the means of exterminating the infected populations of Europe and America.

From the facts stated, I propound the following propositions, the investigation of which I invoke :

First.—That alcoholic liquors, *per se*, are predisposing causes, under favorable circumstances, of the generation of syphilis and gonorrhœa in the human species.

Second.—That the mode of their predisposing these diseases lies in the altered qualities of the secretions of the sexual organs, generated by their habitual use in moderate quantities, producing venereal diseases of a mild character, such as lueorrhœa, balanorrhœa and non-virulent gonorrhœa.

Third.—That they generate syphilis and its so-called secondary, or constitutional effects, as psoriasis or lepra and tubercle.

Fourth.—That syphilitic and gonorrhœal diseases are controlled in their developments by climate, diet and hygiene.

Fifth.—That they produce alterations in the viscera, by their degenerating influence on the blood when used in immoderate quantities, manifested by diseases of a chronic nature in the brain, digestive organs, liver and kidneys.

Sixth.—That the effects of syphilis of the virulent kind, do not terminate with their disappearance in infected individuals having organic diseases of the viscera, but are propagated to their offspring, and reappear in second or third generations, in the form of scrofula, tuberculosis or cancer.

The rapid multiplication of these diseases and their sequels, threatens in the end to exterminate the populations of Europe and America, among whom they have become localized, and by whom they are generated and disseminated, by the addiction of these peoples to alcoholic liquors, producing thereby alcoholism, syphilism, tuberculosis, and cancer to an extent perplexing to the physician, and alarming and lamentable to the philanthropist.

The fact that alcoholic liquors predispose the generation of syphilis and gonorrhœa, under conditions favorable to their development, was made apparent to me in the army hospitals of India, where I first discovered that married men of known connubial fidelity, but given to indulgence in alcoholic liquors, were frequently the subjects

of these diseases. This fact I also observed among unmarried men of fastidious dispositions, who were careful in avoiding all riskful sources of syphilitic infection, but whom I invariably found to have been indulging in alcoholic liquors previous to their contamination with them, and having in addition a cachectic condition of constitution, from the effects of dissipation, climate and military fatigue. The same facts I have observed in different parts of England and, also, in this country; and from a careful examination of the particulars of each case, I have arrived, after thirty years of observation, at the conclusion embodied in the propositions stated above, and in illustration of which I offer the following cases, selected from among a large number of similar ones.

CASE I.

In 1833, at Cawnpore, in India, a soldier in one of the regiments stationed there, a native of England, of tall stature, with bilio-lymphatic temperament and debilitated constitution, presented himself with a syphilitic soft chancre on the left side of the glans penis. He was a married man, of good character and known connubial fidelity, and never had syphilis or gonorrhœa before.* He acknowledged to have had, for some time previous, a predilection for alcoholic liquors, in which he had been indulging to excess previous to the appearance of his disease. His wife was of good character and sound health, and on inspection, was found free from any syphilitic or gonorrhœal disease.

CASE II.

In 1836, at Cawnpore, as mentioned above, a conductor of military ordnance, a native of Ireland, fifty years of age, of middle stature, of nervo-sanguine temperament, of intemperate habits and debilitated constitution, had a syphilitic soft chancre on the upper part of the corona-glandis. He said that he had been abstemious from women since the death of his wife, for the last two years; but that, after indulging to excess in alcoholic liquors for the last month, he had cohabited with a native female domestic. The woman, on inspection, I found free from all syphilitic taint, and whose moral character proved to be unobjectionable. In five weeks after, he developed psoriasis, or the constitutional symptoms of syphilis.

* The public and private behavior of soldiers was made the subject of careful observation by the non-commissioned officers of their regiments, which was my source of information.

CASE III.

In 1837, at the general hospital at Calcutta, in the province of Bengal, an hospital assistant, seventeen years of age, born in the country, of European parents, of middle stature, of nervo-bilious temperament and enervated constitution, had virulent gonorrhœa. He had been drinking freely of alcoholic liquors for some time previously, and could not account for having the disease, as he said he had been particular in the choice of his paramour, who, on inspection, proved to be perfectly free from syphilitic or gonorrhœal disease; nor could I discover, on an investigation of her character and habits, any circumstances to lead me to assign to her the cause of the infection.

CASE IV.

In 1845, at a village near Whitechurch, in Hampshire, England, a farmer's laborer, twenty-two years of age, born in the country, of middle stature, sanguino-lymphatic temperament, and a constitution enervated by dissipation and labor, who was given to the free use of alcoholic liquors, had a soft chancre on the glans-penis, near the frænum, which terminated in a hard chancre in the course of ten days, followed by a bubo in the right groin. He said he never had syphilis or gonorrhœa before, nor could he ascribe the cause of his present condition, as he said he had connection only with a young woman he intended marrying, but that he had been drinking freely of alcoholic liquors for some time previously. The woman, on inspection proved to be free of syphilis or gonorrhœa, and her character unimpeachable, excepting her last error.

CASE V.

In 1847, at Ashton-under-Lyne, in England, a young man, twenty-six years of age, of middle stature, a native of the city of Manchester, of sanguino-nervous temperament and enfeebled constitution, who was habitually a free drinker of alcoholic liquors, had virulent gonorrhœa following connection with the maid of the tavern where he resorted for his potations. The girl, on inspection, had no appearance of any syphilitic disease, and by the report of the landlord of the tavern, had always borne a good character previously. She denied having had intercourse with any other man except the subject of this case.

CASE VI.

In 1861, at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., a married man, a native of Ireland, forty-five years of age, of full stature, of bilio-lymphatic temperament and good previous health, reported that he had been to the city of New York a month before, where he had been excessively fatigued by business in which he had been engaged, requiring over taxation of his physical energies, during which time he partook freely of alcoholic liquors, to which he was habitually addicted. In ten days after his return home he had virulent gonorrhœa, for which he could not account, as he had not, he said, had communication with any woman except his wife. His known character of integrity and morality confirmed his assertion, and his wife, on inspection, proved to be free of all syphilitic contamination.

CASE VII.

In 1864, at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., an unmarried man, a native of the State of New York, of middle stature, thirty years old, of bilio-nervous temperament and previous good health, had been about with company on a visit to a neighboring State, during which time he had indulged freely in alcoholic liquors, to which he was addicted for some years. On his return home he had connection with a young woman of previous good character, and in a fortnight following had syphilitic soft chancre of the glans-penis. The young woman, on inspection, proved to be free of syphilitic or gonorrhœal taint.

CASE VIII.

This case is taken from a number of similar ones, to show the effects of climate and hygiene in controlling the development of syphilitic diseases.

In 1838, at Calcutta, Bengal, in India, three young men, aged respectively twenty-one, nineteen and seventeen years, all born in the country of European parents. The first was of tall stature, nervo-sanguino temperament and good condition; the second was of middle stature, nervo-lymphatic temperament and sound constitution; both of whom had been previously residing in the northern and healthy part of the country, and were of abstemious habits; the third individual was of middle stature, nervo-bilious temperament and enervated constitution, the effect of climate and a too free use of alcoholic liquors, of which he had been partaking freely for a week before his application for treatment of virulent gonorrhœa. He

stated that, in company with the two individuals mentioned above, he had visited a prostitute, with whom he had intercourse, in which the other two had preceded him but a short time, who, on inspection, were found free of the disease, which they thought they had escaped through the habit of abluting themselves after coition. The woman, on inspection, I found affected with virulent gonorrhœa, which she acknowledged to have had on her for a fortnight previously.

For the etiology of scrofula, tuberculosis and cancer, I present the following cases, from among a number of similar ones, that have fallen under my observation :

CASE IX.

In 1859, at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., a boy aged ten years, a native of the city, of nervo-lymphatic temperament and small size, with light hair and eyes, and fair complexion, prominent abdomen, frail constitution and delicate health, had inflamed cervical glands. A year before the birth of this, the eldest son, the father had syphilitic sores on the glans-penis, which, he supposed, were cured before his marriage. His own father he acknowledged to have been of intemperate habits through life, and had died of chronic disease of the liver.

CASE X.

In 1868, at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., an unmarried woman, a native of the State, twenty-six years of age, of nervo-bilious temperament, middle stature, and previous delicate health, presented herself with phthisis pulmonalis. Her mother, fifty years of age, of middle stature, a native of the State, of nervo-lymphatic temperament and delicate health, had, when a child, suppurating glands of the neck, and weakness of the spine. The subject of this case was her only child, whose father died, she said, shortly after the patient's birth, and had been given, throughout his life, to habits of intemperance and dissipation.

CASE XI.

In 1863, at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., a married woman, a native of Germany, forty-two years of age, of bilio-lymphatic temperament and delicate constitution, had cancer of the womb. She reported that her mother died when she (the patient) was twenty-two years old ; that she had light complexion, was of small stature and feeble health, and had, when young, "drüsen geschwulst" (scrofula). Her

father, she said, was of dark complexion and middle stature, a laborer by occupation, and given, throughout his life, to intemperance. Concerning her paternal grandfather, she could not furnish information; but her maternal grandfather, her mother had told her, had been in the Prussian army for some years, and had been of intemperate and dissolute habits.

In conclusion, I beg to observe, that, with exception of the first few years of my observations, I have always used the speculum on inspecting the females concerned in the foregoing cases.

